

The Riddle of Life

REV. ALBERT POWER, S.J.

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That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world (St. John i., 9).

IT is a simple matter of experience that, when an intellectual agent works to produce some object, his action is guided by a purpose, and the object produced is destined to serve some end. A house is built to shelter the inhabitants from the inclemency of the weather; garments are fashioned to protect or adorn the body; tools are cunningly shaped to make them suitable for the artist's work.

When you find an instrument or machine which you have not seen before—a watch, for example—your first question is, "What is it for?" You see at once that it is carefully constructed, and you know that there is some definite purpose which the watch is intended to serve.

Now, suppose that someone suggests that the watch is intended to be used as a paper-weight, to keep papers in order on your desk; you see that it will indeed serve that purpose, but evidently it was not made for that. That answer does not satisfy you, since it does not explain the intricate construction of the watch.

Again, someone might say that the watch is intended as an ornament to be worn on the wrist or like a locket around the neck. Again that answer will not satisfy you; it fails to explain why it has a dial and hands and works.

But when you are told that the watch is constructed to register accurately the passage of time, you see at once that this answer explains the mechanism of the watch and your mind is at rest. But not till then.

PRINCIPLE OF DESIGN

An intellectual being cannot work deliberately to produce any object without being guided by a plan or purpose, and that purpose will stamp itself inevitably on the object produced, will shape and guide the production

of it so that all its parts may be arranged in such a way as to make it fitted for the attaining of its end.

This principle applies also to that delicately and wonderfully constructed instrument which we call a human being. If the watch is built so skilfully to mark the flight of time, for what purpose has the still more delicately balanced instrument of man's being come into existence?

Why is man built as he is, with his marvelous faculties and capacity for knowing and choosing and loving? What is man's relation to the rest of the universe? What is to be his final destiny?

THE RIDDLE OF LIFE

This problem—the Riddle of Life—has been pressing for solution all down the history of the world; this problem confronts every man and woman and child that comes into existence; it is confronting each one of you, and it is a matter of supreme moment to have the question answered aright.

Now, the claim we make is that the Christian Revelation, and it alone, gives an adequate and satisfactory solution to this problem of existence.

Other systems of thought, other philosophies or religions, either give answers which are false or partial and inadequate, or else fail to give any answer at all—give up the attempt to find an answer as hopeless.

We need not dwell on those various and unsatisfying answers of the ancient philosophers. But I will ask your attention for a few moments to the modern agnostic attitude towards this question of man's destiny.

Now, apart from the Christian Revelation or Christian Philosophy, what answer does the world of thought supply to the question: What is the meaning of life? Why are we in existence at all? What is our destiny? Whither are we hastening? What purpose in the universe is man destined to serve?

We know the wonderful progress that has been made in investigating the details of the working of the universe. We are learning more and more every day of the marvellous mechanism of this glorious, shining dance of material things in which we are, each of us, playing a part. The ocean of the sky is yielding up its secrets one

by one to patient astronomers, and they can now report to us the size and shape and weight and constituent elements of the flaming stars that are racing ceaselessly through space. Into the other universe of the infinitely little man penetrates by means of the microscope or chemical investigation; and scientists can report the details of the atomic system and the revolution of electrons, just as they can tell of the wheeling of the stars in space. Man has catalogued the mineral, the vegetable, the animal kingdom. From the rocks he has wrung the secret of the architecture of his earthly home; he can reconstruct the vegetable and animal life of thousands of years ago.

NO PROGRESS

But whilst such marvellous strides have been made in discovering the laws of the universe, the method of its working, the history of its development, what progress has been made in solving the problem of why the universe exists? The problem of man's own destiny? What light has been thrown on the mystery of death? On the question of our existence after death? And, startling as it may appear, we have to reply: Apart from Christian Revelation, man has made no progress whatsoever on these points. The problem of man's destiny, the mystery of death and the life beyond the tomb, in so far as man's unaided intellect has dealt with it, is just where it was when King Tutankhamen was laid to rest in his gorgeous tomb in Egypt 3,000 years ago.

If you look out into the world today—the world, I mean, outside of the Christian religion, the world that is so boastful of its progress, of its discoveries in science, of its engineering triumphs, of its splendid cities and houses and railways and material comforts—look out into that great, busy, roaring world and ask that world about man's destiny, ask that world why is man on earth, whither is he traveling, what fate is in store for him after death? And the answer, the terrible, the hopeless answer you get is this: We do not know; we have no answer to give. Man's destiny is an insoluble enigma, a riddle to which there is no solution.

I repeat, the non-Christian world of today—the civil-

ized, refined, cultured men and women of this twentieth century, who have in such vast numbers turned away from the teaching of Jesus Christ—have no answer to give to this supremest of all the problems of life. They boast indeed of a philosophy, but that philosophy stops with the grave, and its highest achievement is to convince its votaries that they can never solve the problem, that the best and wisest attitude is that of the agnostic, "We know not."

EVOLUTION

And, if you urge that there must be an answer, you are sometimes told that, for a part of the problem at least, Evolution is sufficient explanation. Evolution! That is the god of the modern world. The Greeks erected human beauty into a goddess and deified man's passions; the Romans personified the spirit of war and worshipped the god Mars; the modern pagan world has set up as its idol a certain process of production called Evolution. Oh! the emptiness and hollowness of the answer that thinks to explain the world by Evolution!

For let us imagine for a moment that Evolution were true in the fullest significance of the term; let us suppose that the present splendid order of the universe has been gradually developed or evolved from primordial matter; surely the question still remains to be asked, Who was it started the process? Who gave to primordial matter the marvellous potency and energy which has resulted in such myriad and complicated forms of life and beauty? Furthermore, who has guided the process? A process of evolution is intelligible provided there is a mind causing and explaining the process. Let us take an example. We of today can easily look back and recall the gradual development of the motor car from its first rude beginnings to the splendid efficiency of the modern machine. We can understand such development, because we know that man's mind is there to explain it. We have seen a motor car business develop step by step until its activities cover the globe and its factories are at our elbow; but we know the explanation of all that evolution—the active brain and splendid business energy of Henry Ford.

And suppose someone wanted you to believe that this big business developed all by itself, with no intellect, no big, active brain, no Henry Ford behind it, would you believe that? Would you think that it was satisfactorily explained by saying, "It evolved"?

Or take another example. It may seem far-fetched and exaggerated but it really illustrates pretty well the attitude of the modern infidel Evolutionist.

You are acquainted, let us suppose, with a clever mechanic, skilled in constructing all kinds of ingenious instruments and toys. He can with perfect ease turn out a silver thimble, a gold watch, a microscope, a motor car, an aeroplane, a torpedo. You admire his skill and versatility and brain power. And if you examine an array of such instruments, you praise them as evidence of his wonderful art.

But now let us imagine that someone presents you with a silver thimble, asking you to keep it carefully and note certain changes that will take place in it. And suppose that next day the silver thimble has evolved into a gold watch; next day the gold watch has evolved into a microscope; next day the microscope grew to be a motor car; and this motor car then developed wings and soared aloft as an aeroplane; and the aeroplane finally was transformed into a torpedo, which plunged into the ocean and sank a great liner, what would you think of the skill required to construct a thimble containing latent within itself the potentiality of evolving into all those successive forms? Would you think it reasonable to say that, because the one evolved out of the other, therefore no human intellect at all was required to produce the original silver thimble—would you be satisfied to say: "They just evolved; no further explanation is required."

MODERN EVOLUTIONISTS

Yet, strange and absurd as it may seem, that is just the position taken up by those modern Evolutionists who deny God and claim that Evolution explains the origin of life—men like Haeckel, the famous infidel Biologist, who say: "We don't need God as Creator, because Evolution explains the origin of things." But surely if we needed God to explain the world before

Evolution was thought of, we need Him much more to explain how primordial matter could have the force and energy to develop into the present universe. Evolution really explains nothing; it describes a certain process by which new forms may be produced; but it leaves the fundamental problem as to how and why man and the universe came into existence just where it was.

CHRIST'S ANSWER

As with the world today, so it was when Jesus came. Amidst the highly-developed material civilization of the Roman Empire reigned a lamentable ignorance and darkness about man's destiny, and into that darkness Jesus brought light. "He was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."

Now, what answer did Jesus of Nazareth give to the question: Why is man in this world? What is his destiny? The answer Jesus gave was this: The immortality of the soul is the solution to the riddle of life. The soul is a jewel of priceless value created by God for Himself, and the whole meaning and business of life is to secure for yourself an immortality of happiness in the possession of God.

Your soul, therefore, is not made for pleasure. You must use pleasure reasonably, but you must not live for it. Your soul is not made simply to fulfil social and civic duties, to benefit the human race, to achieve fame or success, to amass riches, to write poetry, to study science or produce works of art. These things are good, but they do not explain your soul, they do not satisfy its longings. They are merely sips from the bowl of knowledge; but your soul is craving for the full draught of the knowledge of the final explanation of things; your intellect will never be satisfied with a partial explanation, a glimpse of one aspect of truth, which is all that human learning can offer.

The soul wants full knowledge of all truth; and Jesus Christ teaches that that is what the soul is destined to attain. And it will attain to this perfect knowledge when it comes to know God, since God is the final explanation of everything—the ultimate reason of existence.

THE SOUL'S DESTINY

Let me dwell on this a little more fully.

The soul is immortal and is created to enjoy God. God is the soul's extrinsic end. Its intrinsic end is its own perfection, which consists in the highest and most perfect exercise of its own faculties of knowledge and love.

Hence it must be developd in two ways—on the one hand as to its intellectual nature, and on the other as to its moral nature.

And, first, man's intellectual nature is perfected by contemplation of the beautiful, and the whole wide material universe of light and harmony, as well as the universe of souls—of other men's characters, virtues and achievements—are spread out before our gaze that by studying them we may grow in knowledge and wisdom. The universe is the instrument of our education; it is the spacious schoolroom which God has constructed for His pupils.

THE DIVINE ARTIST

But, then, in studying nature and mankind we must simultaneously study the beauty and character of God Himself, who through those created things is instructing us about Himself. They are the book. He has written for us to read in order that, by reading it, we may learn something of the Divine Author. By studying the paintings and statues of Michael Angelo you acquire knowledge of the artist soul and mind of Michael Angelo; so, by studying the glorious works of art which God has shaped, you acquire knowledge of the Divine Artist, who through these works is training and educating your soul until you are ready to come in contact with and contemplate the Divine Essence itself. The final perfection of the intellect, the complete satisfaction of its cravings will come when, at last, after its preparatory study of created things, it is admitted to direct vision of the Creator of them.

WE BUILD OUR OWN CHARACTER

Now, if we turn and think of man's free-will and his moral nature, they are perfected by man's choosing and loving what is noble, honorable, virtuous, excellent.

Your choice it is that makes you what you are. Your character is the result of accumulated acts of choosing, of loving, or of rejecting and hating, which make up the history of your life.

That is why the attending to our daily actions is of such consequence, since our daily acts are building up our lives. We are ever weaving our future by our acts in the present. The more perfect and noble and beautiful the object which man desires and clings to and loves, the more his own will and nature are perfected—just as, on the other hand, by choosing sordid, base, disgraceful objects, man degrades and perverts and ruins his nature.

Hence man's final perfection will depend on his acts of choice or love in reference to God, the Supreme Good. And his clinging to God as preferable to all other things whatsoever is the final choice which constitutes the culminating perfection of the will.

Hence Jesus cries out to men: Do not waste your energies on things that pass away with time. Do not pile up precious metals which the rust will consume, or costly garments which the moth devours, or treasures which thieves can steal, but set your heart upon a treasure which neither rust nor moth can consume, nor thieves break through and steal—i.e., on God Himself. He alone can satisfy your soul, still your cravings, and make you perfectly happy.

This, then, is how Jesus answers the Riddle of Life. That doctrine is reasonable inasmuch as it satisfies the needs and cravings of our highest faculties. It is reasonable because it affords an answer to the otherwise insoluble problem of the crying injustices and contradictions of the weary world. It teaches that there is another life in store for us where there will be compensation for the miseries and inequalities of this life.

APPEALS TO WORLD'S GREATEST MINDS

The reasonableness of this doctrine is further shown by the fact that it has approved itself to the world's greatest and best and purest and noblest souls. And in the first place we have for this doctrine of immortality as the prize of life, the overwhelming authority of the

greatest mind the world has ever produced—Jesus of Nazareth Himself.

Even those men who reject the doctrine of Christ's divinity vie with each other in emphasizing the fact that He was the greatest and most wonderful man the world has ever seen. Well, Jesus of Nazareth, Whom these men regard as the world's greatest thinker, simply lived for this doctrine of immortality, and in defense of it He died. His whole teaching was about the supreme value of the soul.

And now note how this doctrine of Jesus and the truth of His claim derives support from the fact that that doctrine and that claim have been accepted by so many millions of mankind, generation after generation, since He lived.

Jesus of Nazareth made the most astonishing claim that any man ever made or could make. He claimed to be God. Such a claim, if not true, would be the most outrageous blasphemy. But the more extraordinary the claim, the stronger the argument in its favor from its acceptance by mankind.

That a man should appear on the stage of history and claim to be God, was, indeed, a wonderful thing; that He should persist in that claim when hunted to death as a criminal was still more wonderful; but that He should have actually persuaded the world to accept His claim so that the most enlightened and virtuous part of mankind should actually worship this hunted, crucified man as the Person of God, that is the most wonderful thing of all—the most astounding fact of history—and the most extraordinary testimony, to the truth of His claim.

THE WORLD'S HOMAGE

And today, 1900 years after Christ lived, when His claim has been scrutinized and examined as no claim was ever scrutinized and examined, and that by the clearest and most penetrating minds the world has ever known; when every imaginable argument has been used to attack it, every weapon which human skill could devise, has been employed to destroy it; whether the rough, brutal weapons of physical force resorted to by Christ's persecutors, from

Nero to Queen Elizabeth, and the penal laws; or the delicate weapons of ridicule and satire employed by Lucian of Samosata in the third century; by Voltaire in the eighteenth century; by Renan and Anatole France in our own days; or the carefully edged weapons used by those modern critics who attack Christianity in the name of science; after this long and fiery ordeal the fact remains that this astonishing claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be actually the Person of God, is today accepted by a fifth of the world's population, including probably the brightest, the purest, the most enlightened, the most sincere and honest men and women in the world. Over 300 millions of people subscribe to the statement that Jesus of Nazareth was God.

And in subscribing to that statement, they are subscribing to, and accepting as true, the answer Jesus has given to the Riddle of Life—that the immortal, priceless soul is the Key of the Universe—is the jewel enshrined in the material universe which explains all the rest.

FRUITS OF THE DOCTRINE

One word more. This doctrine of immortality is also shown to be reasonable by the fruits it produces in the lives of those who walk by the light of this truth, who regulate their conduct according to the principles which result from the doctrine.

You have been honoring the newly canonized Saint, the holy Carmelite nun, Theresa of Lisieux, commonly called the Little Flower of Jesus.

Well, tell me, what is all that story of the Little Flower, but the fine fruit of the doctrine of Immortality? A life like hers is unthinkable except in the light of that great truth. Her whole outlook on life was simply a literal taking to heart of Our Lord's words: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The Battle of Life

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“THE end crowns the work.” There is much truth in those few words. It applies to things physical, intellectual and moral. The wall is finished only when the last brick is laid. The last chapter completes the book. The last blow of the hammer, the last touch of the chisel, finishes the statue. The last few words clinch the argument. The last days round out the life. Think of the thousands of works which men begin with hope and enthusiasm, only to abandon them through weariness, disgust or fickleness. Every one can look back upon some plan conceived, but never born; carefully worked out, only to be set aside because it proved impractical or impossible. That is why we breathe a prayer of thanks when we really finish anything. The tired laborer lays down his tools and rejoices that he has earned rest. The mechanic regards with pride the machine he has contrived. He is proud to see it run smoothly and efficiently. The wounded warrior looks back upon the bloody field and rejoices that he has been able to plant his flag on the enemy's ramparts. The missionary, dying among strangers, finds comfort for his loneliness and want in the thought that he has brought light to them that dwelt in darkness. So, too, the graduate finds pride and satisfaction in the ceremony which closes his days of school or college and launches him upon what he hopes will be a career of success and happiness. Many of us have felt the thrill which came from the call of our name and the touch of the parchment which gave us rank among the few who complete the college course. In that hour we can grasp the meaning of the famous lines St. Paul wrote to Timothy: “I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith.” He wrote those words in the Mamertine Prison where he was awaiting the summons to go out and die. Only a hero could write them. They ring with the confidence of one who has seen the glory of the Lord.

RETROSPECTION

At the end of our college life we all look back and ahead. The sight of what lies behind is not always either

comforting or inspiring. Rare indeed are they who do not see cause for shame and regret. Most of us waste time and opportunity. When we contrast our attainment with our opportunity we have to confess that the harvest is meager indeed. We are like farmers who have good soil and good seed, but who have not tilled the soil or sowed the seed. The crops we gather are small in quantity and poor in quality. When we consider those who have been obliged to study alone and at night, often after days of wearing toil, and who have attained eminence in the professions, we have to bow our heads and confess with shame and sorrow, Lord, I am, indeed, an unprofitable servant! Our cities are filled with men and women to whom every educational advantage has been opened, but who have not profited by the opportunities a prodigal people provide for them.

OUR BENEFACTORS

Then, in that backward look we should not fail to discern the debt we owe to those who made our education possible. They include the parents who have willingly done without many a comfort that we might secure the education they could not acquire. They knew the value of learning. They desired to equip their children for the battle of life. They did all they could to make them fit to contend for the prizes which only the trained man can hope to win. They were willing to hew wood and draw water. But they hoped their children might acquire fame and wealth.

Nor may we pass over the teachers. Perhaps we have often tried them with our indolence and our impudence. But we can now appreciate their patience and their devotion to duty. When the roll of the world's benefactors is written, high on that roll should be the names of the teachers, when we think of all they have to bear, we can form some idea of the life they lead. Disorder is annoying; laziness is disappointing; but indifference is unbearable. Even the Lord tells us it is loathsome. He tells us He can bear with the man who is really against Him, but He has no patience with the lukewarm creature who is neither with Him nor against Him. Finally, in that backward view, do not forget the people who have

built and, perhaps, endowed the school in which you have made your studies. That school has cost some of them dearly. To pay for it they have had to labor late and long. Perhaps they have had to sacrifice food and comfort to furnish the marble halls in which so many youths waste their years. Our opportunities are often bought with the sweat and blood and tears of those whom we never meet and never think to thank.

If these thoughts of what has been will only bring a blush of shame, they will not be wholly idle. But they should do more. They should bring a deep sense of guilt and inspire the firm determination to atone for our negligence by earnest effort. Especially they should inspire the purpose to do for those who are coming after us at least as much as our fathers have done for us. Generously have we received. The past has been lavish in its gifts. Let us be generous to the present and the future.

ANTICIPATION

As we stand on the bank of the river of time, its waters seem bright with life. They laugh as they pass and they urge us to follow them as they flow down into the sea. As the graduate stands on that bank, he ought to think of the parable of the Prodigal Son. That youth did not know the world which he longed to enter. The laughing waters beckoned and called. They offered him pleasures and treasures. But they did not reveal the rocks and the shoals. His old father knew them. He warned the boy. But he, like the youth of our day, thought the old man was behind the age. He thought of his education, his ability, his shrewdness. He longed to test his steel with men of his own stature. We all know the result.

LIFE IS A BATTLE

No man has ever understood or described the philosophy of life so well as St. Paul. Read the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians. Read it, if you like, just for its literary beauty. The thoughts are sublime. The expression is exquisite. He tells us life is a battle. Nor is it an ordinary battle. It is a wrestling. There are just two contestants—you and your enemy. There are no weapons. When men are in deadly earnest, they fling their weapons away. They revert to the primitive instinct. The

fight is man to man. Locked in each other's arms, they struggle and sway, trying for that grip which means death. Not for an instant can they think of anything but the contest. Every nerve and muscle is brought into play. Brain and heart, soul and body, all and everything are involved and absorbed in the battle.

Such, says St. Paul, is the contest in which the soul of man must contend for salvation. His enemies are not other men. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."

OUR ENEMIES

For every man there are a thousand enemies. They are grouped under the three leaders, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Our Saviour warned his disciples to beware of the world. "The world hateth you." It is filled with false prophets. "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God." The reason of this hostility is that the world does not know God. Can any one doubt for a moment that most of the people we meet do not know God? Most of the men we meet in business and in society and even in the learned professions never give God a thought. His will is unknown to them. His law, which is the expression of His will, does not concern them. The one thing they think of is, what can I get out of life? They have the very same aim as the pagans whose philosophy was, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die."

False principles prevail. They inspire and guide men who are successful. These are the first enemies which the graduate has to meet and conquer. Naturally, he will be tempted to think that he ought to follow their example. They have what education only promises. The teachers who trained him are poor and obscure. These men are rich, prominent, powerful. The ordinary man will halt and doubt and yield. Do not results show that the world is right? The home, the Church and the school have given him theories. He sees facts. They are eloquent.

They are enough to deceive even the elect. They will deceive any one whose view of life is partial, who discounts the laws of God, who lives merely for time and not for eternity. But these facts are not convincing. They are few and scattered and they are ephemeral. Human life does not end. "The grave is not the goal." Death is only a change. It opens the door of the changeless world. There is the fullness of life. There justice prevails, appearances vanish; only realities endure. For that world man has been created. There he finds the peace his soul craves. But the price of peace is loyal and unselfish service. "To serve God is to reign." Man must serve Him here willingly or he shall be forced to serve Him there. There wrong shall be righted and virtue and vice shall receive their due. To win in the battle of life man must overcome these false principles.

Then we have an adversary who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. The devil is a reality. He lives. He is active. He has an eternal hatred of God and of everything God loves. Fallen though he is, he has not lost his angelic nature. He is wiser than any man. His experience is age-long. He has met generations of men. In every generation he has conquered many. No one knows human nature so well. He never rests. Nor is he alone. He has an army of wicked spirits. He directs their work. He has another army of men and women who are his agents. They do his bidding. They are in the high places as well as the low places. Kings and statesmen, clergymen and laymen, merchants and laborers, they are all working with him and for him. He stirs up strife through them. He makes nations bleed and suffer through pride, jealousy and ambition. He inspires the false teachers in pulpit and platform. He guides the pens and pencils that flood the world with vile books and wicked pictures. Who can fail to see his hand in the plays and pictures that defy decency and destroy modesty?

These enemies beset youth at every side. He must be wary and aggressive. He must put on the armor of God for defense and use the weapons of God for attack. If he depends on his education he will fail. He must use "the sword of the Spirit." He must pray. He must walk with God. He must not only fight under God's direc-

tion, he must have God with him. "Without me you can do nothing," said Christ to His apostles. Neither can we. There is a system of education which wrecks man. It fills him with pride. It feeds him theories, not truth. It makes him judge all things by human standards. It tells him there is nothing which the senses cannot grasp and verify. It dethrones God and dethrones reason. It removes all control of thought and conduct. Under that system there is no responsibility, save to society and to reason. The same system wrecked Paganism. It is wrecking thousands, and it would wreck the world were it not for the saving grace of religion. In spite of all the claims and denials Religion lives and influences life. It cries out in the conduct of the thousands whom it inspires and sustains. It acts like the leaven in the mass of meal. God orders all things sweetly. His Spirit acts and speaks in men. It keeps virtue and honor and vice in bondage. There is a sense of shame which even the worst men feel. It makes them hide their vices and, in spite of themselves, admire the virtues which others practice. All this will appear to those who think and pray. But man needs faith. "The just man lives by faith." Faith lights his path. It arms him for the fight. It warns him of danger. It unmasks his foe. It clothes him with "the armor of God" and arms him with "the sword of the Spirit." So clothed and armed, no foe can conquer him. With them, he can and will win the crown of everlasting life.

Amusement in Life

VERY REV. P. J. COONEY

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WITH respect to the question of Amusements, the modern age has lost all sense of proportion and of the fitness of things. It has come to regard pleasure as an end, and, in consequence of this wrong notion of the matter, has become pleasure-mad. It no longer subordinates the pursuit of pleasure to the higher aims of life, but, on the contrary, makes it the supreme concern of human striving. Pleasure bulges too large in the thoughts of the modern generation. It is imperatively necessary that we return to saner views with regard to this subject, for, otherwise, the mad rush for pleasure will leave us physically exhausted and morally ruined.

WHAT IS AMUSEMENT?

By "Amusement" we understand those lighter forms of activity to which we turn when we are relieved from the stress and strain which the serious tasks of life impose upon us. In amusement we can follow out lines of choice and special preference, which we are not permitted to pursue in our daily work—that is usually imposed upon us without any particular regard for our tastes and wishes. Amusement in this wide sense relieves and agreeably interrupts the dull routine of existence. The more the work in which a person is engaged assumes the character of drudgery, and the less it is interesting and spiritual, the more does play become necessary in order to prevent a dulling of the finer sensibilities. Unfortunately, the modern division of labor and over-specialization of function have taken the joy out of work and reduced it to a purely mechanical task that makes no appeal to the higher faculties of man.

As an inevitable consequence of this lamentable state of affairs, the call for Amusement is becoming increasingly urgent. For youth, the necessity of play is even more imperative, because its spiritual faculties have not yet become fully developed, and require some outward stimulus that will arouse them to activity. Play is an important factor in the spiritual development of the young. It enters into their post-school education, and is of supreme importance in bringing to full bloom and rich maturity

the talents with which Nature has endowed them, and which, without the beneficent action of play, would remain atrophied and stunted. The question of amusement or play, then, presents both an educational and moral aspect—sufficient reason for us to give it a generous measure of attention.

RELIGION AND PLAY

Religion, far from casting a pall of gloom over life, has on the contrary been a joyous element in human existence, and lifted it to the serene heights of gladness and ecstasy. Before the time of modern secularization of life, which came as a result of the Protestant Reformation, the Church not only catered for the spiritual needs of the people, but it also made generous provision for popular amusement and recreation. The whole of life gravitated towards the Church as its dominating center of attraction. The popular festivals that gave the people an opportunity to relax from their daily work, and to strengthen themselves for new tasks, were of a religious character. Recreation was taken in the shadow of the Church. There was nothing profane; everything was sanctified. Knowing full well that the people needed entertainment, the Church made sure that that entertainment would be inoffensive, wholesome, and clean. Then came the Protestant Reformation that tore Christian Europe asunder, and with it came the great divorce. Life was taken away from the religious influence of the Church and reconstructed on entirely secular lines. Among other things, recreation was separated from the Church, and, as Francis Thompson says, "The separation has been ill for recreation; and it has not been well for religion." Both suffered, as is usually the case when an unnatural severance of things that ought to be united is brought about. Recreation speedily degenerated, and fell into the hands of unscrupulous men, who exploited it for the sake of profit, without any regard for higher considerations. Forms of amusement were introduced that, by their very appeal to the baser instincts of nature, ruined innocence and spread corruption. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that more souls are ruined by improper and tainted amusements than by any other agency. Hence the Church has often been compelled to

take an attitude of disapproval towards many of the amusements indulged in by the people, and through this attitude often appears, to the young and inexperienced, as an enemy of joy.

The Catholic Church has always taken a sane stand in the matter of amusement. It does not condemn pleasure or play or amusements. It knows that human nature cannot be re-made, and that periods of recreation are a psychological necessity. Its doctrine concerning pleasure is in full harmony with the nature of man. It condemns the excess in pleasure as it denounces excess in everything else, and it reprobates those forms of recreation that either are sinful in themselves or are calculated to lead to sin.

When we ask which amusements are best suited to fill up the free time of our young people, we can answer in a general way: Those forms of recreation are most beneficial which require some co-operation on our part, and which call into play the faculties that are not sufficiently exercised during our work, whilst they allow the faculties over-stimulated by our vocational occupations to rest. It follows from this that hardly anything will be more beneficial to our young people usually confined during the working hours in office buildings than exercise of a kind that will take them into the great outdoors, where they can breathe pure air, let their eyes feast on the beauties of nature, and permit their limbs that freedom of action which favors healthy growth and promotes harmonious development. Least desirable are the purely passive forms of recreation, which contribute very little towards mental or physical development, and serve only to while away the time.

WHAT RECREATION SHOULD NOT BE

We have all had the melancholy occasion of witnessing the demoralizing and even brutalizing effect of certain amusements. There are amusements that arouse the worst instincts in man and stir up the basest impulses. They bring everything that is vile in us to the surface, as a storm that disturbs a stagnant pool to its very depths. Amusements of this type fail to bring recreation and to promote happiness. They leave the participants in a state of physical exhaustion and mental depression. They

undermine the health and stupefy the mind. There is nothing elevating or ennobling in them, and those who indulge in this kind of recreation are to be pitied.

It should give (1) rest from work; (2) afford joy; (3) enhance physical vitality and increase mental vigor; (4) offer opportunities for pleasing social contacts; (5) begin, renew, and strengthen friendships; (6) introduce us to intellectual pleasures, such as good literature, history, religion, science, and teach us the enjoyment of objects of art. Recreation should contribute towards a harmonious rounding out of our education; awaken in us a taste for culture and things of the mind; draw out and develop the finer human emotions and cultivate the aesthetic side of our nature; furnish an outlet for artistic abilities and inventive genius; exercise our faculty of choice; and, in general, allow us to grow up to the full stature of manhood and womanhood in the practice of the moral, social, and domestic virtues.

THE HOME AND RECREATION

We all lament the fact that the home is no longer the recreational center of the present generation. The older people remember how, in their youth, they found entertainment round the family hearth, how friends called, and how visits were returned. These gatherings had a value. Parents were able to appraise the character of those with whom their children were forming friendships. The friendships so formed lasted, and where the family was truly Catholic, the natural affections were strengthened and developed. The virtue of benevolence and service developed in these Catholic homes was carried abroad, and applied to those outside the circle. There was a real spirit of service, and a genuine regard for one's neighbor developed in those homes of the older generations. In these old-fashioned homes there was authority; to it respect and reverence were shown and submission given. These Catholic homes were the breeding-ground of all the virtues needed for the individual's social and national life. Our Catholic women have it in their power to restore the home to what it was in days gone by, and to what God intended it to be, viz., the asylum of happiness and peace. The crying need of the day is the creation of real homes.